

## Out for A Duck

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—BY—  
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The fixture between Muggleton and Dingley Dell was an annual one, for ever since the days of the famous M. Pickwick the two clubs had played against each other. Every one knows what a charming ground the Dingley Dell C. C. possesses, and how keenly the inhabitants of the villages follow the noble game.

Probably there was no greater enthusiast in the county than Mr. Ebenezer Payne, the president of the Dingley Dell. Being sixty years of age, he was, of course, a player no longer, but in his youth he had been no mean performer, and had been coached by the celebrated Dumkins.

No British matron alive was more inveterate match-maker than this old gentleman, but as he was a widower, with a small income, five daughters and a maiden sister, there was some excuse for him. Success, however, attended his efforts—four daughters had captured suitable husbands; only the youngest remained. As Maud was lively and pretty, and only twenty, her father had great hopes of her future.

It was a perfect summer's morning, and Dingley Dell was en fête for the return match vs. Muggleton. In the first encounter of that season Dingley had been beaten by four wickets, and was burning to avenge the defeat.

"I have observed of late, my dear," remarked Mr. Ebenezer to his pretty daughter, with a sly twinkle in his eye, as they strolled together along the lane in the direction of the cricket ground, "I have observed that our friend Duxbury has been paying you marked attention."

The wish was father to that observation, for Duxbury was a most eligible person, but Maud blushed and cried, "Nonsense, papa!" with some warmth, for the afore-said Mr. Duxbury was not one of her favorites.

"I am convinced," continued Mr. Ebenezer, "that it is not nonsense. Now, under ordinary circumstances I should say, 'Be careful,' but Duxbury is so extremely wealthy that—well, well, he's a fine bat, too. Seen his best, perhaps, but still he's a fine bat."

"You're quite mistaken, papa," answered Maud, with cheeks aflame; "Mr. Duxbury and I are excellent friends."

"Hoity-toity! Excellent friends," Mr. Ebenezer retorted, "That's what a girl always says when she intends to disappoint her father's dearest wishes. I want to see you happy and prosperous, my dear, with a husband of substance." Duxbury weighed fifteen stones. "You don't imagine I should care for you to throw yourself away on an empty young fellow—like Charles or Harry, for instance."

Maud blushed still more deeply. Charles and Harry were prominent members of the Dingley Dell eleven, and both were her devoted admirers. As they were handsome, genial fellows, she admired them both in return, but naturally one was a greater favorite than the other.

A crowd of rustics and cricketers were gathered in front of the pavilion as Mr. Ebenezer and his daughter entered the ground, and the two rival captains were walking down the steps to take for choice of innings. Slogger Duxbury, Esq., captain of Dingley Dell—a fine, full-blown specimen of humanity—spun the coin into the air. It fell; a mighty cheer arose; Duxbury rushed back into the pavilion beaming with smiles, for the Dingley Dell team was to bat first. Mr. Ebenezer, of course, went to inspect the order of going in, leaving his daughter to stroll by herself in the pretty paddock that adjoined the pavilion.

She was not alone for long. Before five minutes had elapsed she was joined by a fat, dark man in white flannels. He was wearing pads and carried a bat under his arm.

"Good morning, Maud," said he. "Excuse me taking off my cap."

"Oh, Charles, you'll get a sunstroke, you careless man!" he replied, as he brushed his hair with a cap, you know," Charles answered, with a laugh.

"I suppose you think the crowd wouldn't recognize you if you did," returned Maud, who knew the ways of cricketers.

A meaning smile passed between the young couple, and just at that moment another cricketer joined them. It was the rival lover Harry.

He and Charles were the two best batsmen on the Dingley Dell side, and were going to commence the innings together. He was rosy and fair to look upon, so no wonder Maud's face brightened when she saw him. Charles did not notice the expression, as he was executing certain customary flourishes with his bat, but Harry saw it and took heed. The rivalry between the two young men was somewhat severe, so there was always a little embarrassment when the three met together.

"Good morning, Miss Payne," Harry remarked. "I'm sorry to hear from your father that this will be your last visit to the ground for some time."

"Yes, I'm going to Oban to-morrow to stay with my sister," answered Maud. "I expect I shall be away a month."

"To Oban! Why, that's where you're off to, Charlie," exclaimed Harry abruptly, turning with a rather suspicious glance towards his colleague.

"Yes, yes—for a day or two perhaps," replied Charles evasively, a little confused.

"Well, I do hope you two will make a lot of runs," Maud broke in hastily, beaming indiscriminately on both. "You ought to do on such a warm day."

She was almost as great an enthusiast as her father, and quite an authority on the game.

"Thank you, I feel in good form at any rate," answered Charles, cutting an imaginary long hop to the boundary.

"I don't," remarked Harry, who was a little cast down by the news about Oban. "I shall probably make a few runs, and have to watch the game all the afternoon."

Maud's face brightened into a smile, though the remark should have saddened her. Once more Harry noticed her expression and drew his own conclusions.

"Oh, if you feel like that you're as good as out before you get to the wickets," Maud responded. "Charles promised me yesterday to make fifty, and you must do the same."

"I'll do my best," replied Harry, humbly, realizing that the rivalry between himself and his fellow-batsman was indeed a serious one.

The bell had rung and the Muggleton team were walking into the field, throwing catches to each other with the ball, as the photographer of Mr. Pickwick notes they did in the olden days. The umpires had already reached the wickets, and by right Charles and Harry ought to have been preparing to follow them. Yet they lingered with the lady of their love.

Suddenly a stalwart form appeared on the Veranda of the pavilion. It was the great Duxbury, captain of Dingley Dell, choleric and red of face. He caught sight of the group in the paddock.

"Now then, what are you two fellows doing?" he cried. "They're waiting for you. Look slippy!"

"All right, old man," Charles called out. "We're only having a word with Miss Payne."

"Don't argue with me," roared the irate

captain. "Good morning, Miss Payne. You don't want either of these two fellows, do you?"

"Certainly not, Mr. Duxbury," replied Maud in answer to the abrupt query, amused at the scene.

"There, you see," the young lady doesn't want you," exclaimed Duxbury triumphantly. "What do you mean by going where you aren't wanted?"

"Keep your hair on, old man," replied Charles. "Come on, Harry, the stage waits. Good-bye, Maud, for the present."

Like all good cricket captains, Mr. Duxbury had a temper, and was very proud of displaying it. He was built on the lines of "W. G.", and had a large rufous countenance. He was squire of Dingley Dell; played cricket all summer and shot any game he saw, except foxes, in the winter. Charles and Harry strolled to the wickets, both full of anxious thought. Each was deeply in love with Maud, and each was speculating upon his chances of winning her.

Hitherto she had shown such discrimination in bestowing her favours that neither was aware which stood first in her regard. Charles felt very nervous, but was fairly confident. The forthcoming visit to Oban, which had been cleverly planned, would give him a great advantage over his rival, and should he please her by making a big score this afternoon it would be a good way of leading up to it. Harry was nervous, too, but his emotions were more subtle and complex. A terrible temptation had seized him. He was divided betwixt loyalty to Dingley Dell and adoration of Miss Maud. By sacrificing the one he fancied that he might steal a march upon Charles. During the whole of the summer he had found it almost impossible to have a quiet tête-à-tête with his lady love, for the ubiquitous rival turned up and spoiled it all. Now that he had learnt that Maud was leaving Dingley the next morning, and that the dangerous Charles would meet her at Oban, his dismay was too deep for words.

Meanwhile Mr. Ebenezer was hobnobbing with Captain Duxbury on the front seat of the pavilion, and was holding forth upon his favorite theme.

"Slogger, old man, don't you sympathize with me?" he observed. "Here I've got four daughters married, and not one of 'em has a boy. All girls, confound 'em!"

"Well, they may notch a few later on," muttered Duxbury, tightening his pad strap.

"It is my dearest ambition," continued Mr. Ebenezer, "to produce an infant cricket phenomenon, as they do in piano playing. A sort of concentrated essence of 'W. G.' and 'Liebig's extract of little brigs.'"

"Well, I hope you'll do it," answered Duxbury, who cared for none of these things.

"He shall be brought up in the atmosphere of the game," said Mr. Ebenezer, enthusiastically. "I'll coach him myself. His bassinet will be constructed out of a disused cricket bag; a bat shall be his first wooden horse; he can cut his teeth on that," and he picked up Duxbury's batting glove.

This sounded personal, and Duxbury was getting vexed, when Mr. Payne, at this point, broke the thread of his discourse to shout out "Pretty!" for Charles had glided the first ball of the match to the glider boundary. The remaining four balls were played carefully back to the bowler.

It was now Harry's turn, and he was faced by the redoubtable Luffey, grandson of the famous contemporary of Dumkins. Though the first ball was straight it was miserably short, and the batsman stepped forward to pull it round to square leg, but lo! and behold, he struck under the wickets. Half the fielders were starting for the catch, when a warning shriek from their captain checked them. The ball descended safely into the bowler's hands; a groan went up from the Dingley Dellers, and Harry walked away on his return journey to the pavilion.

"Well, I'm dashed!" roared Duxbury. "Did you ever see such a bally stroke in your blessed life?"

"Out for a duck again!" groaned Mr. Ebenezer.

"You're a nice sort of chap," cried Duxbury, as Harry approached the pavilion. "That ball wanted lifting out of the field."

"Sorry, old chap. It got up rather awkwardly," replied the unabashed Harry.

Duxbury, who was rolling up his shirt sleeves, being the next batsman, muttered some rude chestnut about spooning.

"Now, Slogger, old man, you show 'em how to force the game," said Mr. Ebenezer, encouragingly.

"What's the time?" retorted Duxbury. "Half past twelve."

Duxbury shouldered his bat, and looked around with an imposing air.

"What's the score, boy?" he asked, addressing the scorer.

"Four, one, nothing, sir."

In another moment the captain was striding towards the wickets amidst the applause of the supporters of the Dingley Dell.

"We meet again," Harry remarked when, resplendent in the Dingley Dell blazer, he joined Maud a few minutes later.

"Oh, I'm vexed," she replied.

"Then I'd better go away."

"No, I didn't mean that—but, oh, you've got a duck."

"I wish I'd got two," Harry replied with meaning.

"That would be a pair of spectacles, wouldn't it?" said Maud, innocently.

"Should we look as bad as that?"

"As what?"

"A pair of spectacles."

"You're very silly," Maud replied with pretty petulance. "It doesn't require spectacles to see that."

Just then conversation was interrupted, for Duxbury gathered hold of a delightful half-volley lifted it over the seat where they were sitting.

"I'm afraid you're in a dangerous position," Harry remarked, rising.

"With such a good fielder as you to protect me, I shall be all right," she replied, with a bewitching smile.

This was flattering to his vanity, but did not satisfy him, for the seats near them were rapidly filling with spectators, and he had something to say that he did not wish to be overheard. After a little persuasion Maud consented to walk round the ground with him. They enjoyed the stroll, but did not pay much attention to the game, although Duxbury was stogging in great style, and the rival Charles was making the most correct cricket by the stream which bordered the field.

"What a slogger Duxbury is!" said Harry, significantly. "I really think, don't you know, that you would be safer if we went into the next field."

"You seem very anxious to drive me out of the grounds," answered Maud. "I'm not a cricket ball!" But she accompanied him, and through the gate and over the bridge, and through the trees where no one could see them.

Presently Duxbury, after a brief though extremely merry innings, was caught on

the boundary, and covered with glory and perspiration returned to the pavilion.

"Boy, how many have I made?" he asked the scorer, when he had recovered sufficient breath to speak.

"Sixteen, sir!" was the shrill answer.

"Nonsense, I made two first ball."

"One was a short run, sir."

"Well, that's one, then! I hit three fours and a three—that's sixteen. And then the two, that's eighteen."

"You've counted that already, sir."

"Confound your impudence! I made eighteen. Alter it at once. Knock two off the byes if it don't add up right."

"It's an extraordinary thing," he observed triumphantly to Mr. Ebenezer, "they never put down all my runs. I've always to alter my score."

"I hear similar complaints every Saturday afternoon," replied Mr. Payne, sympathetically. "It's a grave scandal—there's something wrong. I'm thinking of writing to the M. C. C. about it."

"Don't, it'll not be a bit good," said Duxbury, hastily.

"Charles is playing well, isn't he?" Mr. Ebenezer remarked.

"He has such deuced luck—gets all the easy ones," said Duxbury. "It's a funny thing, I always get the cream of the bowling. Did you notice the first one I had? I could see what the fellow was going to do before he bowled—wanted to bowl me off my pads. He sent down a beautiful length ball—it came like lightning off the pitch, broke back at least a foot straight for my left pad! I just jumped in front of my wickets and nicked him to leg. And when I got to the other end the fellow said it was a fluke."

"That no ball beat you, my boy," said Mr. Payne. "Lucky thing it didn't count."

"My good man, it would have beaten Ransil or Clem Hill at their best," retorted Duxbury with warmth. "It is a perfect length, curled a yard in the air, hung on the pitch, shot like a rocket, twisted in six inches, grazed my right toe and just tipped the off stick! I could see what the fellow was going to do before he bowled, and I should have played it. But a fly got into my eye."

It is probable that Mr. Duxbury's discourse upon the incidents of his innings would have lasted for a considerable time, but just at that moment he caught sight of a lady in the paddock who was pacing up and down with evident impatience. Her figure was majestic and her gown was gorgeous. Hastily putting on his coat, the captain of Dingley Dell left Mr. Payne abashed and hurried to her side.

Mr. Ebenezer adjusted his spectacles and gazed after the retreating cricketer with a look of apprehension.

"Who is the—er—elderly lady that Duxbury's talking to?" he asked, nudging his next-door neighbor in the ribs.

"Eh, what—oh, the one in scarlet?" replied the person addressed, who was absorbed in cricket, glancing round dreamily.

"Don't you know?" Why, that's old Duxbury's widow—she's just come to live at the Browers' house, and she's worth a million, and there are no kids. They do say that she and Duxbury—"

Mr. Ebenezer had already arisen, and an only half-suppressed oath was quivering on his lips. He beat a hasty retreat to the refreshment bar inside the pavilion.

Meanwhile Harry and Maud were sitting in a shady nook in the little wood which borders the cricket ground.

"What would Captain Duxbury think of this fast round arm of yours?" she inquired, with a coy glance towards her waist, where his hand was resting firmly.

"Oh, we can easily square Duxbury."

"I thought it was impossible to square a circle."

"He can't talk! He's probably behaving just as badly with his widow."

"Oh, it is such fun about that widow. Papa will be dreadfully annoyed. Why, he actually thought—"

And Maud proceeded to tell her fiancé what papa had imagined, and the reflection caused them much amusement.

Presently Harry, with his arm around his sweetheart, ventured to make to her the awful confession that he had got out on purpose.

"Oh, you wicked man!" she cried. "It may lose us the match."

"I'd rather lose the match than lose you," he answered, defiantly, as he gazed into her eyes.

"But I could have waited until another day!"

"I dare say. And perhaps Charlie would have snapped you up in the meantime."

"Nonsense. I should have had nothing to say to him."

"How was I to know that. I was afraid you liked him, so I became desperate. You're off to Oban to-morrow, and so is he. I didn't know what might happen before I saw you again, so I made up my mind I'd have first innings with you to-day, and I think I have scored, my pet."

"Just fancy that poor fellow making all those runs, and thinking he is pleasing me! It's too bad. He is playing so well."

Nevertheless, the wicked Harry was disturbed by no qualms of conscience. Jealousy had tormented him sadly of late, or he could not have resisted smiling Luffey's first ball for four minutes, and giving him an easy catch. It was vile treachery to Dingley Dell, he knew, but he hoped to atone for it in subsequent matches. And, Maud, enthusiast though she was, felt secretly a great joy that Harry had preferred to propose to her instead of doing his duty as a batsman.

While they were sauntering beneath the trees, wholly absorbed in one another, suddenly they ran up against Duxbury, who came rolling slowly along with his arm around his widow, and giving him a cheery catch. For a moment Harry and his captain eyed one another with startled surprise; then a simultaneous wink flashed like a heliograph signal between them; each raised his cap and passed on.

"That's the little girl I told you of that the old boy's been dangling at me for so long," said Duxbury when the other couple were out of earshot. "Ought to be ashamed of himself. I'm old enough to be her father!"

Though the widow did not like the last remark, she did not criticise it.

"Why, the young man is a sort of second cousin of mine," she remarked. "My trustees have just got him made secretary to the brewery. He's a nice boy."

Half an hour later when Harry and his fiancée returned to the pavilion Charles had just been bowled for a finely played innings worth fifty-five, and he immediately sought out Maud to receive the praise that was his due. Her congratulations were most hearty, and Harry, who sat by her side, jealous no longer, was equally warm in his praise.

Then the ponderous Duxbury, who was standing by, and who liked stepping upon people's corns, spilt the unanimity of the party altogether.

"Yes, Charles, my boy, you deserve your congratulations," he exclaimed. "But you ought to return the compliment and offer yours."

A moment later Charles said he thought he would find substitute for Luffey, who had hurt his hand in trying to stop a hot return. And he went!

Somehow Mr. Ebenezer heard about the brewery secretaryship, and before Harry interviewed him, so he took the announcement of the engagement very calmly.

"Of course, Harry dear, I'll never tell that you got out on purpose," whispered Maud as they walked home after the

match, which Dingley Dell, thanks to Harry's bowling, had managed to win.

"By love, no," he replied. "If Lacey got to know, I should be court-martialed by the M. C. C. and shot in front of the pavilion at Lord's. And it would serve me right!"

Though Maud did not, most people would have agreed with this last remark.

### OUT OF THE ORDINARY.

In 1790 North Carolina ranked third in population of all the States. Now she ranks fifteenth.

California did not figure in the census returns of the United States until 1850. Then its population was 92,507.

The per capita of money in circulation in the United States on July 1, 1900, was \$25.93. On July 1, 1875, it was \$15.32.

The Suez canal is eighty-eight miles long, and reduces the distance from England to India nearly four thousand miles for ships.

The Salvation Army is at work in forty-seven different countries, and has fifty-five periodicals, printed in twenty-one languages.

Persons on public ships in the service of the United States or stationed abroad when the census was taken last year numbered 89,570.

The people of Iceland are all poor, but there are no paupers, no dependents; all are self-supporting. There is little or no crime there.

Buffalo points with pride to its cancer laboratory as the first of its kind in the world. It was established and thoroughly equipped two years ago.

The London Letter says there must be in that city some 500,000 persons who cannot afford to pay a sufficiently high rent to secure healthy houses.

As a result of the lifting of the revenue stamp act on bank checks many federal employees are likely to find themselves out of a job. This move in effect July 1.

The strongest paper yet produced is made of Manila hemp. A sheet of legal cap will sustain a weight of 300 pounds and a man of ordinary muscular power cannot tear it across.

Alfred the Great founded the University of Oxford in 936 A. D., while an academic institution was founded at Cambridge by Sigebert, King of East Angles, as far back as 844 A. D.

The impression prevails that but few people know how to cook rice properly. At the Buffalo exposition a rice kitchen will be opened to show the delights of well-cooked rice.

The density of population in Rhode Island is 104.16 inhabitants to the square mile, which is the greatest of any State or Territory in the United States, except District of Columbia.

When the first census was taken in 1790 Pennsylvania's population was 94,253 greater than that of New York. By the census of 1900 the population leads that of Pennsylvania by 95,897.

In the United States the public high schools in 1890 graduated 20,444 boys and 20,112 girls. In 1900 the number of boys in attendance at public high schools was 138,157; of girls, 260,413.

In 1900 the fortune in the United States was \$25,000. To-day there are several fortunes of more than \$200,000,000. In 1890 the settled area consisted of 365,736 square miles. To-day it is over 2,000,000 square miles.

The farmers of Rock county, Missouri, seem to be prosperous. The treasurer of the town of Lima has collected every cent of the tax levy of the year, and the treasurer of the town of Fort reports a delinquency amounting to only 65 cents.

Marriageable women in Serbia have a queer way of announcing that they are in the matrimonial market. A dressed doll hanging in the principal window of a house indicates that there is living there a woman who is anxious to become a bride.

The order just filled in Connecticut for a million pounds of trolley wire for an electric road in India is the greatest export order for this material ever received in the State. The reels upon which the wire was wound required nearly 100,000 feet of lumber for their construction.

It has been generally supposed that much meat in warm climates is not a good thing, but one of the ablest army surgeons has decided that under the hot suns the carbon in a white man's blood is speedily oxidized and burned out by the sun, and a great deal of meat must be eaten to supply the waste.

A rummage sale held in a St. Paul (Minn.) church Sunday of last week raised \$15 for a former pastor of the flock was sold for 15 cents. The bust had been sent to the sale undervalued, and when the mistake was discovered the ladies of the church persuaded the purchaser to relinquish his bargain.

The Royal William, built in Canada, was the first ship to cross the ocean propelled all the way by steam. The first iron transatlantic steamship was the Great Britain, which discarded the paddle wheel and adopted the screw propeller. The steamer Ontario launched last year marks an epoch in steamship history and surpasses even Jules Verne's wildest flights of fancy.

At a meeting of the Academy of Medicine, Dr. J. J. Moore announced the discovery of a remedy for the foot and mouth disease, which is so fatal to sheep. He said he has successfully used the remedy in 1,500 cases in two years. It consists of a concentrated solution of chromic acid, which is put at 33 per cent. This is applied as a caustic to the sore. The cure is rapid and certain.

The steamship Celtic, to be finished and launched this summer, will be the largest vessel on the ocean. It will have a displacement of 3,000 tons, nearly five thousand greater than the largest steamship now afloat. A half dozen long railway trains can be carried by her, and she will be able to provide for nearly 2,000 passengers, almost an army brigade, and Captain Ismay expects to see an even greater number on board the Celtic built within a year or two.

Signor Matteucci, who has been studying Vesuvius for many years, recently made a report on the activity of the volcano. From July, 1895, kept constantly active for more than four years, the flow of lava ceasing in September, 1898. The depth of the crater was then over 600 feet. Last April the lava rose to within 250 feet of the top, and a series of explosions and eruptions broke began. Some blocks of lava were projected 1,500 feet perpendicularly into the sky. One block weighing half a ton, and a great deal of lava, fell into the crater. Matteucci estimates that it took 60,000 horse-power to eject it.

### The Prayer.

I was in heaven one day when all the prayers came up, and I saw them then on the stairs. Who was ordained an eminence? Who should sort them so that in that palace bright the presence-chamber might be duly light? Who were there the more the carnal bloom; And a divinest fragrance filled the room.

Then did I see how the great sorter chose. One flower that seemed to me a healing rose, Who had been plucked from the garden of life, And who had been plucked from the garden of life.

Of that irregular loveliness, Who had been plucked from the garden of life, And who had been plucked from the garden of life.

"Is for the Master," so upon his way, He would have passed, and I thought of him, The chiefest, "Knowest thou not?" he said, "This is the first prayer of a little child."

### Simple Country Living.

YOUTH'S Companion.

A man may enjoy bounding health and know very little about the cause of his happiness; and alas! a man may suffer all the woes of dyspepsia and have no certain knowledge as to the cause of his misery.

"I'm a confirmed dyspeptic; that's the reason I look so old," said Mr. Hollander, a stout, middle-aged man, sitting at the red-brick house of his former chum at college,